# Pubic Symphysis (Gender Differences) Encyclopedia Article

## Pubic Symphysis (Gender Differences)

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# Pubic Symphysis (Gender Differences)

The pubic symphysis is the **fibrocartilage** that connects the pubic bones of the pelvis. The structure and relative elasticity of the pubic symphysis is important to normal childbirth because the broader **cartilage** that exists in females allows a greater spreading of the pelvis and wider birth canal for the passage of the fetus during childbirth (**parturition**).

The pubic symphysis is a cartilaginous articulation of the pelvic innominate bones and it is the anterior landmark of the pelvis. Along with the sacroiliac **joints**, the posterior **synovial joints** that articulate the sacrum and innominate bones.

Along with the pubic bones, the public symphysis defines the subpubic arch. In females, the pubic symphysis is broader than it is in males and thus the angle of the subpubic arch is less acute (greater angle). In females the public angle usually measures about 80° about twenty degrees greater than the average male public angle that measure about 60°.

Although in absolute terms the male pelvis is larger, the relative broadness of the pubic symphysis and the wider pubic angle allows the female pubic cavity to exceed the volume of the male pelvis. This increased capacity has obvious reproductive and evolutionary advantages.

Radiological examination (examination via x-rays and other **imaging** techniques) establish that in both females and males there is a slight narrowing and hardening of the pubic symphysis that is identifiable between 25 and 35 years of age. Differentiation of sex, based upon pelvic angle, can also be made in imaging examinations of the developing fetus.

The determination of the size and degree of calcification of the public symphysis is important in the forensic or archaeological examination of skeletal remains. Measurements of the pubic symphysis (along with other features such as the curvature of the sacrum) allow examiner to definitively determine whether a skeleton is female or male. Examination of the public symphysis also allows a less reliable estimate of the age at **death**.